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THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION
JUL 30 2010
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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOC
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SINCE 1877
JULY 29, 2010
VOL. 134
No. 29

MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

Youth Night '10 held in Jackson, Tupelo

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The largest annual gathering of Mississippi Baptists anywhere in the state tried something new this year. Participants apparently liked it and planners were obviously pleased.

"For the first time in the history of Mississippi Baptist Youth Night, two sessions were held in two locations in different parts of the state, to give churches the opportunity to participate that had not or could not attend the one session in the past at Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson," said Don Lum, evangelism director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.

Mississippi Baptist Youth Night 2010 was held on the evening of July 16 at the traditional site, Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson. New this year was the addition of a session the next evening at BancorpSouth Area in Tupelo.

"Attendance was good in both locations," Lum said. "There were about 5,500 people at Mississippi Coliseum, and about 2,000 people at BancorpSouth Arena. The combined total attendance was close to what we have drawn in years past with the one session in Jackson, and close to what we expected for the first year that two sessions were held."

Lum said feedback from church leaders who brought their young people to Tupelo was positive. "We've known for some time there are churches that can't afford to come all the way to Jackson, or don't have the transportation to make the long trip."

"The Tupelo session gave many of those churches an opportunity to attend Youth Night closer to home, where the logistics of getting there weren't nearly as difficult. We believe many of the churches were able to bring their young people on a short trip to Tupelo that otherwise couldn't have attended (in Jackson)."

Mike Brister, event coordinator and student pastor at First Church, Jackson, agreed with Lum. "This was a great start for the Tupelo location. The BancorpSouth Arena provided an intimate setting because of the way it was divided up," he said.

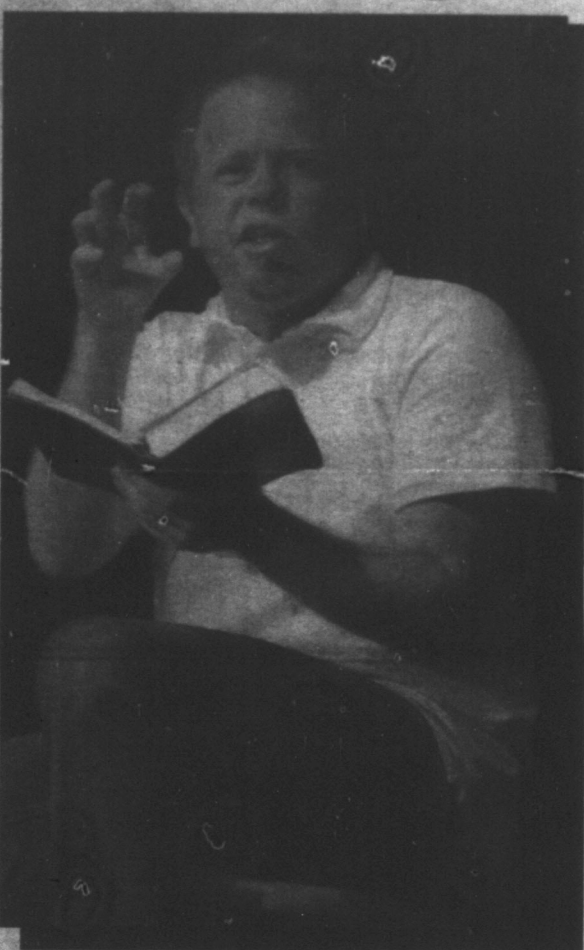
Poor weather conditions may have held down attendance in Jackson this year, Brister said, but he is optimistic the attendance in Jackson will rise again to the traditional 7,000 attendees while the Tupelo location will continue to grow.

Lum said the Youth Night planning committee will analyze the effectiveness of the two-location format before deciding whether to extend the format to include the 2011 event. "I'd like to go with it again next year," Lum said. "I believe attendance will continue to increase at the second session as people become accustomed to the idea."

David Rhodes of Wayfarer Ministries in Spartanburg, S.C., was the speaker this year at both locations. The Aaron Keyes Band provided worship at both locations. Keyes is worship pastor at Grace Fellowship Church in Snellville, Ga. It was the first appearance for both men at a Mississippi Baptist Youth Night.

"David connected well with the students, as I thought he would. He had a powerful message of what Jesus can do in the lives of individuals. Aaron Keyes and his band have a reputation for elevating worship to a higher level, and I believe everyone saw that in Jackson and Tupelo," Lum said.

The young people who attend Youth Night continue to put Mississippi Baptists in the best possible light, Lum added. "Several of the security personnel and other employees of BancorpSouth Arena told me that our crowd was very different from some of the other events they have there, such as rock concerts. Our young people are always very respectful and well-behaved at these events, and people notice."



Rhodes

Serving this year with Lum and Brister on the Mississippi Baptist Youth Night planning committee were Ricky Young of Tupelo; Lance Word of Meridian; Chad Thompson of Tupelo; Gary Watts of Raymond; Neil Tullis of Jackson; Justine Shipley of Columbus; Jason Westmoreland of Morton; Shannon Shivers of Kosciusko; Chris Layton of Mendenhall; and Danny Forrest of Wesson.

"I want to thank these folks who worked so hard to put together the two-location Youth Night for this year," Lum said. "I also want to thank the leaders who brought their young people to Youth Night, and the leadership of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for stepping out on faith and supporting this two-location pilot project."

"We had a great opportunity this year to impact Mississippi's young people for Christ, and that's the whole reason for Mississippi Baptist Youth Night."

To provide feedback or for more information on the 2011 Mississippi Baptist Youth Night, contact Lum at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3278 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: dlum@mbcb.org.

Mississippi Baptist Youth Night is a ministry of the Mississippi Cooperative Program.



IN WORSHIP — Aaron Keyes (at keyboard) and his band provided worship at the 2010 Mississippi Baptist Youth Night on July 16 at Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson, and at BancorpSouth Arena in Tupelo on the following evening. A number of young people made decisions for Christ at the two locations during the annual event. (Photos by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Experiencing God passes twenty year mark

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Join God where He is working. That simple premise hasn't changed during the two-decade history of Experiencing God, an interactive Bible study first published in 1990 that taught a radically God-centered way of life.

Initially written by Henry Blackaby and Claude King, the material was revised and expanded in 2007 by Richard Blackaby, Henry Blackaby's son.

Now, 20 years since its debut, the workbook is available in more than 45 languages and has sold seven million copies. Internationally, reader testimonials describe deeper and more intimate understandings of God's desire for relationships with them that will change their lives forever.

On a larger scale, Experiencing God has affected entire organizations, many of which credit the study with helping turn bad situations into good and bringing hope to tragic circumstances.

In 1995, Burl Cain became the new warden at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, arguably the most violent and dangerous prison in America. Knowing how God had used Experiencing God in his own



Richard Blackaby

life and believing that real change takes place in the heart, Cain soon introduced the workbook to the 5,200 inmates at Angola prison.

Over time, more and more inmates responded to the message. Some felt called to serve as Christian ministers and began meeting with other inmates for worship and prayer. New Orleans Seminary later opened an extension center at the prison, and more than 150 men have earned bachelor's or associate's degrees.

Inmate volunteers built chapels on the prison grounds. To this day, inmate congregations continue to use Experiencing God to lead others to deeper relationships with Christ.

Cain said that since inmates began studying Experiencing God, acts of violence have dropped 70%. Inmates have requested to be sent to other prisons where they can begin new ministries. Each year, 500 children get to spend a day with their incarcerated dads at a carnival, and an annual rodeo and craft show draws 15,000 people from the community to spend time with the inmates.

Cain said that since inmates began studying Experiencing God, acts of violence have dropped 70%. Inmates have requested to be sent to other prisons where they can begin new ministries. Each year, 500 children get to spend a day with their incarcerated dads at a carnival, and an annual rodeo and craft show draws 15,000 people from the community to spend time with the inmates.

Hospice care is available for dying inmates, and cardboard coffins have been replaced with polished wooden ones built by inmate carpenters.

A sign at the prison gate paraphrases Philippians 3:13 and summarizes the thoughts of Cain and the men who have experienced God: "I don't look to the past, I press on to the future."

A January 2007 news story about an 18-year-old patient at Wolfson's Children's Hospital in Jacksonville, Fla., led businessman Carldon Lahey to make a contribution to the hospital. His step led to the start of Christ's Starfish Foundation, a program committed to helping non-cancer patients in pediatric hospitals and their families.

Lahey traces the inspiration for the foundation to his Sunday School class study of Experiencing God. For him, the study became a spiritual marker — a time of transition, decision, or direction — to which God had clearly guided him.

"I learned that God initiates everything and everything came from Him," Lahey said, noting that the concept changed his life. "I know that when God puts something in your hand, you run with it."

The program has expanded to children's hospitals in other Florida cities. "We are trying to make a difference, one hurting family at a time, helping hurting children and their families in the name of Jesus Christ," Lahey said.

Since its beginning in 1956, Emmanuel Church in Farmington, N.M., has been known as a church with a heart for missions.

When Emmanuel studied Experiencing God as a congrega-



Henry Blackaby

tion, one line in the material — "You cannot be in relationship with God and not be on mission" — convinced church members they should determine where God is working and join Him.

Emmanuel supports a school, the local crisis pregnancy center, and the crisis closet of the San Juan Association. The church also is known for helping people with their utility and rent bills,

giving aid to victims of Hurricane Katrina, and ministering to AIDS orphans and prisoners.

The congregation has started five mission churches, one of which has grown to start a mission of its own. "There is just a lot our members are involved in, and they want to be," Kirby Kennedy, a former pastor, said. "They want to give — of their finances, of their gifts, of themselves — because God is the greatest giver."

Through the years, LifeWay Christian Resources has published an entire family of Experiencing God resources, including an Experiencing the Word New Testament and the Experiencing God musical.

The 2007 revision, adding Richard Blackaby as a co-author, offers DVD messages and new applications and stories.

The vehicles carrying the message have changed, but the message remains the same. Experiencing God leads believers to know God intimately and encourages them to faithfully step out and join Him in His work, with miraculous results.

For more information on "Experiencing God" materials, go to www.lifeway.com/experiencinggod.

TLW 3.0 coming

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — True Love Waits will launch True Love Waits 3.0: A Path of Purity during the National Youth Workers Conference sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources in mid-September. "A little over a year ago, youth workers and student ministry leaders in the sexual abstinence movement met at a summit to consider the future direction of True Love Waits," said Jimmy Hester, cofounder of True Love Waits. "The summit's sessions focused on better understanding specific challenges students are facing, needs leaders have in meeting them and ways in which True Love Waits can remain effective for future generations." Participants also cited the need for more emphasis on parental participation, specifically ways to support parents as the primary spiritual developers of their children. In response, True Love Waits has created True Love Waits 3.0: A Path of Purity. In sync with the ministry's sexual abstinence-until-marriage message, Hester said the new TLW initiative will address a variety of markers students experience from childhood to young adulthood. Resources for 3.0 will help guide parents and church leaders to utilize these markers as teachable moments on purity. Among the parenting-related topics to be included in 3.0 are parental supervision and standards; consistency of lifestyle at home; taking preventive measures rather than being solely reactive; and issues related to dysfunction in families. Further details about the 3.0 initiative will be reported from LifeWay's National Youth Workers Conference, Sept. 13-15 in Nashville, which organizers describe as "three days of inspiration, encouragement, and practical how-to's focused on developing students." For more information on the National Youth Workers Conference, visit <http://www.lifeway.com/lnywc>.

Looking back

10 years ago

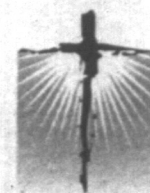
V. Daniel "Dan" West, manager of Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko since 1979, announces his intention to retire August 31 from his position at Mississippi Baptists' Royal Ambassador campground.

20 years ago

A total of 39 Baptists from Northwest Association in Mississippi spend a portion of their summer vacations in Champaign, Ill., helping construct Garden Hills Church as well as assisting the local association in surveying local area needs and conducting weekend revivals in three churches.

50 years ago

Mississippi Baptist Hospital moves into its ultramodern \$200,000 emergency unit July 18. Personnel receive the first three patients in the new location at 1 p.m., according to Paul J. Pryor, administrator.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

JULY 29, 2010

VOL. 134

NO. 29



YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



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Send changes of address to: The
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and
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Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

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VOLUME T34 • NUMBER 29
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4
and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist
Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street,
Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per
year payable in advance. Economy plans
available for cooperating Mississippi churches.
Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS.
Member, Association of State Baptist Papers.
Deadlines: News items — one calendar
week prior to requested publication date.
Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to
requested publication date. All submissions
are subject to editing.

Worldwide scam on the World Wide Web

Beloved in Christ, Calvary Greetings in the Name of our lord Jesus Christ, I have been briefed to contact you because of passion for humanity and sympathy for people with just causes. I am a new Christian convert, suffering from long time cancer.

From all indications my condition is really deteriorating and it is quite obvious that I won't live more than six months. It has defiled all forms of medical treatment, and right now I have only about a few months to live, according to medical experts. I have not particularly lived my life so well, as I never really cared for anything but my business. Though I am very rich, But now I regret all this as I now know that there is more to life than just wanting to have or make all the money in the world.

I want God to be merciful to me and accept my soul so, I have decided to give alms to charity organizations and those in Need, as I want this to be one of the last good deeds I do on earth So far, Now that my health has deteriorated so badly, I cannot do this myself anymore. The last of my money which only my Attorney knows of

is the huge cash deposit of Five Million United States Dollars (\$5,000,000.00) that I have with an Asset Management / Vaulting Company Abroad. I will want you to help me collect this deposit. I am willing to donate this 5 million U.S. dollars to you for the less privilege and for practical Christian service and concern.

And upon my instruction, my attorney, who presently is in Accra Ghana distributing relief materials to victims and an application for the Transfer of the money in your name. Lastly, I honestly pray that this money when it get to your hand will be used for the said purpose. So if you know that you will use this fund honestly for things that

will glorify God's name and purpose of God's work, then do urgently contact me back and the details will be given to you on how you will be able to receive the fund.

Anyone with a computer and an e-mail address has likely received at least one such plaintive message lately — if not a whole slew of them. At The Baptist Record, the count for just this year is several hundred such messages.

The names and reply addresses may be different, but the point is always the same: The writer is a rich but dying new Christian, always overseas, seeking to give away his fortune to someone who will use it properly to ensure his entrance into heaven. All that need be done is to contact the writer for instructions on how to transfer the money.

If the recipient does reply, he/she is usually told to withdraw a substantial sum of money from their own bank account and send it to the writer, so that the writer's money can be freed up. Then, according to the writer, all of the recipient's money plus the newfound fortune will be sent back to the recipient.

It all sounds too good to be true, and it is. These are Internet scams of the highest order.

"The scheme relies on convincing a willing victim, who has demonstrated a 'propensity for larceny' by responding to the invitation, to send money to the author of the letter in Nigeria in several installments of increasing amounts for a variety of reasons," reports the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), referring to a particular scam that originates in the African nation of Nigeria.

"Payment of taxes, bribes to government officials, and legal fees are often described in great detail with the promise that all expenses will be reimbursed as soon as the funds are spirited out of

Nigeria. In actuality, the millions of dollars do not exist and the victim eventually ends up with nothing but loss," the FBI states.

"Once the victim stops sending money, the perpetrators have been known to use the personal information and checks that they received to impersonate the victim, draining bank accounts and credit card balances until the victim's assets are taken in their entirety. While such an invitation impresses most law-abiding citizens as a laughable hoax, millions of dollars in losses are caused by these schemes annually," the FBI warns.

There are many variations on this Internet scam, some involving the expressed desire to plant new churches, donate large sums to a seminary, or provide Bibles to people groups who have none. It's hard to believe folks fall for such a pitch but, according to the FBI, it happens often.

It's particularly egregious when Southern Baptists fall prey to such artifice, because we already have the best system in the Protestant world to fund such mission endeavors. We don't need to respond to scams foisted on us in the Name of the Lord to accomplish our duty under the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

Southern Baptists have the Cooperative Program, the missions offerings, and many other ways to support the spreading of the Gospel that have been proven effective and cost-efficient. If there are any doubts about whether a program is worthy of our involvement — spiritually as well as financially — we must be willing to do the research and ask the hard questions to be sure the cause is legitimate.

Don't waste your money. Don't waste the Lord's money. Don't respond to these scams. Do the right thing.

GUEST OPINION:



Raising the bar for modern movies

By Phil Boatwright
Kansas City, Kn.

Recently I received an e-mail from a reader who disagreed with my overall negative assessment of The Prince of Persia. He felt I was out of touch with the younger of the movie-going public, and though I don't think the guy was trying to diss my work, he made it clear that I should "raise the bar" by being more open-minded to what a rising generation requires from movies. He further suggested that I add a much younger reviewer to my staff.

Well, first off, there is no staff. I'm the staff.

Normally, I let my work defend itself, but I'd like to comment on that recent critical communiqué because I think those of us of a certain age are finding that not only does everything change, but in this the era of Twitter, change has become incessant and unfeeling. This gives birth to the question, "Is all change progress?" The dispiriting condition of our present culture would suggest otherwise.

Along with this merciless age of change, we also see the youth of our species catered to, the rest of us designated to the background of life, much like extras in a bad movie. I under-

stand the business sense of this trend. We old guys already know what toothpaste we're going to use, so advertisers aim their commercials at those they consider ripe prospects. Same goes for movies. If you blow something up, studio heads are assured of a faithful adolescent audience.

Though movies and television are an escape from daily pressures, excess in the forms of cynicism, crudeness, and lewdness have infested the mediums of entertainment. Along with the mayhem of this summer's actioneers, look at what has changed in this area of film humor. Contemporaries Jack Black, Will Ferrell, Seth Rogan, Mike Myers, Ben Stiller, and Jason

Segal, along with their comic clones, insist on spending much of their screen time in the sewer. There are a great many people willing to sludge around in these cesspools of sophomoric stench, somehow believing this is the genesis for all things funny.

This summer, young moviegoers have digested nothing but the cinematic equivalent of headcheese, having never been offered filet mignon. Sadly, despite the aid of the video store's Classics section, and TV's best channel, TCM, I don't see a resurgence of sophistication or droll wit anywhere in Hollywood's future. Still, I can't compliment the indecent or be content with the

insipid in order to attempt relevancy. Teens and adolescents are being shortchanged by movie execs who make a whole lot of jack. It is my duty, and yours, to cultivate the tastes of our nation's youth, not merely allow them to remain cocooned in their disconnected presumption.

That may sound high-minded, even pompous, but the alternative is to acquiesce in order to relate. The Scriptures instruct us to not conform to the world, but to be set apart. We are to be the salt of the Earth and a light to the lost, not a copycat in order to be accepted.

In my appreciation for movies, I've adopted the new word "preservatism." My goal is to direct the next generation toward new and old movies that adhere to biblical principles. Yes, I will attempt to stay appreciative of changing tastes, but when it comes to analyzing films, I shall continue to yell, "Headcheese," whenever headcheese is served.

Boatwright reviews films from a Christian perspective. Visit moviereporter.com for his reviews. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Christians murdered in Pakistan's third largest city

FAISALABAD, Pakistan (BP and local reports) — Two Pakistani brothers accused of blaspheming Islam's prophet Muhammad were gunned down by suspected Islamic extremists on July 19 in Faisalabad, the country's third-largest city.

The brothers, Rashid and Sajid Emmanuel, both Christians, were arrested July 10 for allegedly distributing a pamphlet with "disrespectful material" about Muhammad, according to a BBC report on July 20.

Rashid Emmanuel was the leader of United Ministries Pakistan; its website was not operative on July 21. One source on the Internet described United Ministries Pakistan as encompassing several churches, a school and orphanage, a women's program, and other initiatives.

Emmanuel, on a Web profile page, had stated, "We are a group of believers, committed and dedicated to preaching the Word of God and have been helping the poor and downtrodden people of this area for the past 5 years."

According to a UPI report, the ministry was located in the Waris Pura slum, encompassing about 100,000 people in the Faisalabad metro area of 5.4 million people.

Emmanuel's brother Sajid was described in news reports as a graduate student and one of the ministry's leaders.

There are conflicting reports whether the brothers were gunned down prior to or after a hearing on the blasphemy charge and whether they were killed inside the courtroom or outside the courthouse.

A police official also was critically injured in gunfire lev-

eled by as many as five gunmen, all of whom escaped.

According to the Compass Direct News Service, the gunmen shot the Emmenuels five days after handwriting experts notified police that signatures on materials denigrating Muhammad did not match those of the brothers.

As recounted by Compass, "Expected to be exonerated soon, the two leaders of United Ministries Pakistan were being led in handcuffs back to jail under police custody when they were shot at 2:17 p.m., Christians present said."

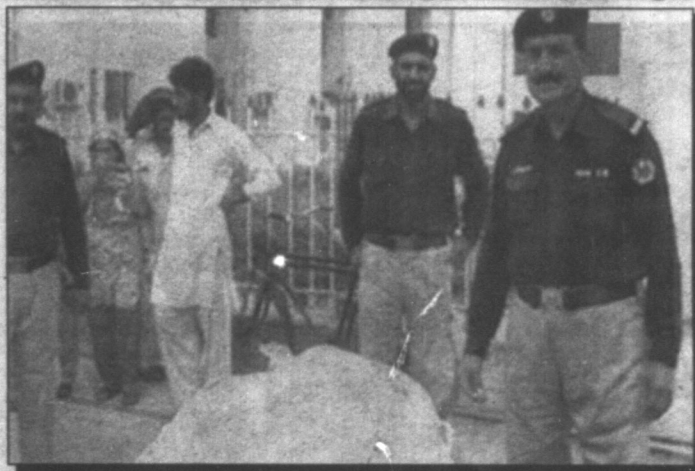
The UPI reported, meanwhile, that the brothers were killed prior to their hearing on the blasphemy charges.

Compass reported that Sajid Emmanuel died at the scene of a gunshot to his heart. Rashid Emmanuel, who was shot in the chest, died later.

The brothers' murders sparked clashes involving ethnic Christians in the Waris Pura slum, police and Muslims, the UPI reported.

After the Emmenuels were arrested on July 10, several hundred demonstrators marched to the Waris Pura slum voicing demands that the brothers be executed, the BBC reported.

Concerning the blasphemy charges, the BBC quoted Atif



CHRISTIANS MARTYRED — The body of Rashid Emmanuel, a 32-year-old leader of a Christian ministry in a Pakistani slum, is removed from the courthouse where he and his brother Sajid were slain July 19 while fighting charges that they distributed pamphlets blaspheming Muhammed. (BP photo courtesy of Compass Direct News Service)

Jameel, a spokesman for the Pakistan Minorities Democratic Foundation, as stating: "No one in his right mind would issue a derogatory pamphlet against the Prophet and put his name and address on it."

Jameel added: "This appears to be a conspiracy against peace and religious harmony in Faisalabad."

News reports quoted local residents who asked not to be

identified as saying the distribution of falsely incriminating pamphlets and other written material is a common tactic to settle scores with enemies — especially those perceived as religious enemies.

According to the BBC, no one has been executed under Pakistan's blasphemy law, although "about 10 accused have been murdered before the completion of their trial."

STAFF CHANGES

Freney Church, Carthage, has called Marcus Canoy as pastor. He is shown with his wife Whitney and his children Nolan and Kayleigh.



1. The Canoy's

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REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

- Rocky Springs Church, Yazoo Association:** Revival, July 30-31, 7 p.m.; homecoming, Aug. 1, 11 a.m., followed by potluck dinner. Rocky Henriques, speaker; Carol Montgomery and Allan Campbell, music; Gary Henderson, pastor.
- Rolling Creek Church, Quitman:** Homecoming, Aug. 14, 7 p.m., with Squire Parsons in concert; Aug. 15, services, 11 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Bill Riley, speaker; Greg Mangum, music; Ronnie Cooper, pastor.
- Liberty Church, Liberty:** Revival, Aug. 8-11; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., noon (lunch provided) and 7 p.m.; David Bishop, pastor and speaker; Steve and Becky Carver, music.
- Holcomb Church, Holcomb:** Revival, Aug. 1-4; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Ken Boyette, speaker; Jackie Johnson, music.
- Hathorn Church, Columbia:** Revival, Aug. 1-4; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds and gospel singing; Mon.-Wed., concert, 6:30 p.m., worship, 7 p.m.; Tate Cockrell, speaker; Duke and Linda Barnes, music; Wade Barnes, pastor.
- Shiloh Church, Lafayette County:** Homecoming, Aug. 1; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by noon meal and singing; Gerald Shook, speaker; Fishers of Men, music.
- Sand Hill Church, Attala Association:** Homecoming and revival, Aug. 1-4; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by lunch and 6 p.m.; Ed Newman, pastor and speaker; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; children and youth pizza, Mon., 6:30 p.m.; family night, Tues., 6:30 p.m.; Wed., fellowship meal and family night, 6:30 p.m.; Danny Lanier, speaker.
- Juniper Grove Church, Poplarville:** Homecoming, Aug. 8; Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner on the ground; Phil Hanberry, speaker.
- Society Hill Church, Oakvale:** Homecoming and revival, Aug. 1-6; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.;
- Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Bill Miller, speaker; Billy Paul Cooper, music.
- Crooked Creek Church, Silver Creek:** Homecoming, Aug. 1; services followed by covered dish lunch; Emon White, speaker; Harmony Trio, music; Chad Carney, pastor.
- McAdams Church, McAdams:** Revival, Aug. 8-11; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Missionary speaker Sun. a.m.; Campers on Mission speakers other services; James E. Young, pastor.
- Sardis Church, Smith County:** Revival, Aug. 2-4, 7 p.m.; Alan Woodward, speaker; Skippy Griffith, music.
- Beacon Church, Hattiesburg:** 45th anniversary, Aug. 8; worship and lunch; Kyle Jones, speaker.
- Yockanookany Church, Attala Assoc.:** Revival, August 11-13, 7 p.m.; Junior Davis, speaker; Gerry Ellington and Jennifer Cagle, music; James Burrell, pastor.

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ZOICAR, ZOICAR, A YUR
MEPT RTM, OJVOWP U
VTIE TN HLOUP NUCC
AEPT PLO SITMEQ UEQ
QAO, AP UDAQOPL
UCTEO: DMP AN AP
QAO, AP DIAESOPPL NTIPL
GMVL NIMAP.

FTLE PHOCZO: PNOEPR-
NTMI

Clue: N = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Ten: Thirty-Four

A LONG STEADY STREAM

Streams and rivers have significance in most of our lives and historically have more impact on a region, state, or city than most of us realize. I was thinking about streams, creeks, and rivers in Mississippi and the far-reaching impact they have had on our state. I thought about the Mississippi River and when we say Mississippi, it can refer to our state or it can refer to the huge flow of water that glides down the western side of our state. Sometimes when we say Mississippi, the two things are so intertwined that it could be one or the other or both. Our nation's greatest river, the Mississippi, flows somewhere around 2,350 to 2,500 miles across our nation. It is difficult to find the exact length of this mighty river because the channel changes even now and causes the length to change.

At its beginnings in Lake Itasca, you can actually touch both banks at the same time at some points, while at its widest point the mighty Mississippi is a mile across. Following this mighty stream across the continent will allow you to see streams, creeks, and rivulets as well as other strong rivers that flow into it and become a part of the mighty Mississippi. Until this day, one of those creeks is known as Coles Creek. If you drive down the Natchez Trace toward the city of Natchez, you will see the sign as you cross over Coles Creek. Now what started me thinking about these creeks, streams, and rivers across Mississippi was the recent death of one of our dear Baptist ladies, Miss Bonnie Cole.

Miss Bonnie died on June 30, 2010, at 94 years of age. It was my privilege and blessing to know Miss Bonnie. I was always blessed and impressed to see her, shake her hand, and listen to her tell of her great heritage. I went to Miss Bonnie's funeral because I recognized that her passing was for Mississippi Baptists a historical moment and the passing of an era. You see, Miss Bonnie Cole's life was where two great streams of Baptist families converged.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

She was a direct descendent of the Coles of Coles Creek. She was also a descendent of the first Baptist preacher who came to Mississippi, Richard Curtis Jr.

She was well versed in Mississippi Baptist history and she was certainly proud of her Mississippi Baptist heritage. At the funeral service, Miss Bonnie's nephew, Frank Gurn, shared a personal revelation that Bonnie had written some years ago. She was no doubt contemplating her life and the purpose for which God had created her. "I was made to give," she wrote. For all of those who knew her, were around her, or walked the journey of life with her know that she was designed by God to give to others. It was who she was and it was what she did.

At the funeral her pastor, Floyd Higginbotham, spoke to the fact that she not only lived long she lived well for nine decades and that too was a mark of her life. Now it would be an understatement to say that she loved history. She loved historical memories and historical markers. We were so honored to have her present at the dedication of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Monument on Highway 61, just south of Natchez. She was thrilled to be there, and she not only brought insights she brought such blessings to all of us who were there.

Beyond just historical markers in life, she set in motion something that is even more significant. One of her final acts in the later years of her life was to set up a scholarship fund at Mississippi

College specifically designed to enable students to prepare their lives for serving the Lord. What a magnificent and thoughtful thing that will have ramifications far beyond her life and far beyond the understanding of what people will have of what Miss Bonnie Cole did for them in preparing for them to be aided in their educational walk.

Now stop for a moment and think about this stream. The Coles Creek stream, the one down in southwest Mississippi, flows into the Mississippi and on to the Gulf. Through the years, the family of Coles, Miss Bonnie being one of many, has formed great tributaries of help, resources, love, and

encouragement to other folks. Though she is gone, the stream of influence and care continues. In her case, while she was made to give, there is a sense in which her giving will never stop. Revelation 14:13 says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors," and listen to this, "and their works do follow them."

Miss Bonnie Cole was physically but also spiritually a descendent of the Coles of Coles Creek, the Curtis' of the first Baptist church in Mississippi, and all she did in her 94 years was enlarge the stream of influence from those folks. What a testimony of a life that was well lived. May God in His wonderful grace, power, and in the uniqueness of the way that He uses His people keep touching other lives through this long, steady stream.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.



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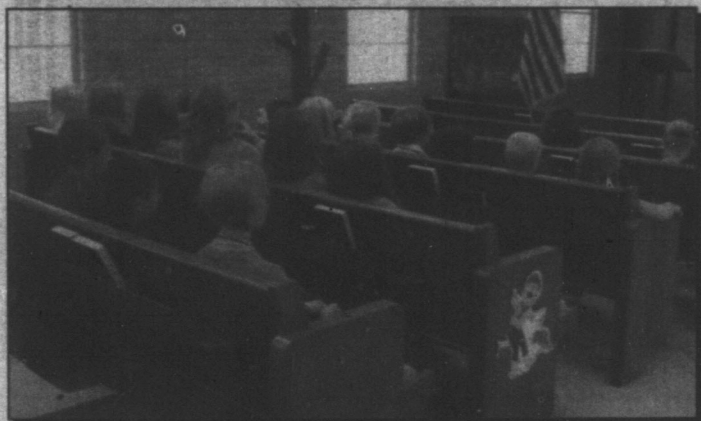
VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



1. Cedar Grove Church, Columbia



2. North Morton Church, Morton



3. Melrose Church, Yazoo Association



4. Holcomb Church, Grenada County

1. Cedar Grove Church, Columbia: June 11 - 14; shown are the participants.
2. North Morton Church, Morton: Shown are the participants.
3. Melrose Church, Yazoo Association: First VBS in 16 years; enrollment, 50, with three professions of faith. Shown are the participants.
4. Holcomb Church, Grenada County: June 28 - July 2; average attendance, 110; blankets were made by children and sent to children in Africa.
5. Crenshaw Church, Crenshaw: June 21 - 25; average attendance, 45. Shown are the participants.
6. Cash Church, Lena: June 6 - 10; average attendance, 20. Shown are the participants.
7. North Morton Church, Morton, recently held its annual traveling youth/college VBS. The youth met at the church each night and were driven to their destination. Shown are the participants.
8. Beulah Church, Lexington, recently held Vacation Bible School. Pictured are participants.



5. Crenshaw Church, Crenshaw



6. Cash Church, Lena



7. North Morton Church, Morton



8. Beulah Church, Lexington



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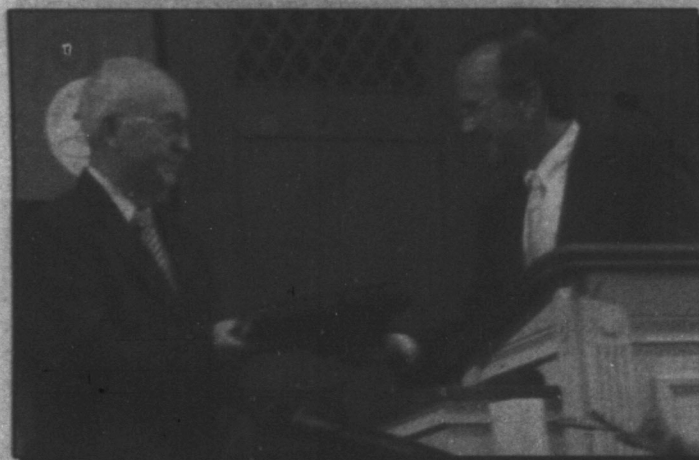
JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. New Henleyfield Church, Pearl River County



2. Tomnolen Church, Webster County



3. Breland and Neff



4. Fellowship Church, Ellisville



MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

1. New Henleyfield Church, Pearl River County, recently ordained four new deacons. Shown, from left, are Byron & Renee Burge, Doug & Carolyn Lee, pastor Drew Dabbs, Mignon & Mark Kellar, and Melissa & Craig White.

2. Tomnolen Church, Webster County, held a deacon ordination service June 27. Shown are Matt Pogue, pastor Don Parish, and David Canterbury.

3. First Church, Cleveland, honored Jimmy Breland for 60 years in ministry July 11. Breland began in 1950 at Liberty Church, Carroll-Montgomery Association, and in 1951 began a 40 year work with the BSU at Delta State University. He has served many churches as interim pastor and is currently pastor at First Bellevue Church, Shelby. Shown are Breland and pastor Park Neff.

4. Fellowship Church, Ellisville, held a missionary commissioning service for their missionaries who will be going to Mexico. Shown are Laken Abadie, Lindsey Abadie, Shannon Herrington, and Donna Temple.

5. Corinth Church, Magee, recognizes its children's Bible drillers and its youth Bible drillers. Shown are the participants.

6. Mountain Creek Church, Florence, celebrated their 164th anniversary and note burning on their five-year-old fellowship hall June 27. Jody Gousset, pastor. Shown are the participants.

7. New Haven Church, Weir, has sponsored James and Ellen Sheedy on mission trips to South Korea for the past two years. During the first two weeks of July, members of the South Korean church that works with them visited Tennessee and Mississippi. Present when they visited New Haven Church were (front, from left) Kim Jea Yeup, Rudy French, Kim Mina, Chung Hun Hwa, (rear, from left) Rose French, Kim Tin Won, and Jung Mi Sook. The South Koreans stayed at the home of New Haven Church pastor Jim Ballard and his wife Betty. The Sheedys' will travel to South Korea again in October.



5a. Corinth Church, Magee, Youth



5b. Corinth Church, Magee, Children



6. Mountain Creek Church, Florence



7. New Haven Church, Weir

Football great wants dads to be everyday leaders

TAMPA, Fla. (BP) — Tony Dungy no longer needs the game-day apparel and gear of a National Football League (NFL) head coach, but that doesn't keep him from donning distinctively different attire when the occasion calls for it.

"They asked me to play John the Baptist," Dungy said of his church's Easter pageant, in which he baptized his 18-year-old son Eric, who was playing Jesus.

"It was just really moving," Dungy said. "I was just so proud of him." Smiling at the memory of the moment, Dungy credited his son with having "a heart" to practice and rehearse.

Perhaps Dungy's role as John the Baptist may be apropos to the prophetic voice the former Super Bowl-winning coach has been sounding for men to love and respect their wives and for fathers to be a down-to-earth Superman to their children.

In a broader sense, Dungy's prophetic voice has pointed people toward living for Christ, indeed letting Christ live through them, as the ultimate success in life.

Since retiring from the Indianapolis Colts in 2009, Dungy has kept his pledge to spend more time at home with his wife Lauren and their six children as well as more time at Central Tampa (Fl.) Church.

It's the kind of commitment he promotes as a spokesman for All Pro Dad, a football-themed organization that aims to help men be good fathers.

At church, whether in teaching settings or just his attendance on Wednesday nights, Dungy has stepped forward.

It's been "fun," as he described it, "just being there and just being supportive and talking about what it means to grow up in this world, some of the pressures that you are going to see and how to handle them, and what the Bible says

about image and decision-making and role modeling — just to be a sounding board for the young people in our church."

Being consistent on Wednesday nights was Dungy's intent in taking a weekend role on NBC's Football Night in America after retiring from the NFL, and it enables him to be involved with his kids' sporting events, birthdays, and parent-teacher conferences.

"I feel like I'm more of a dad now," Dungy said.

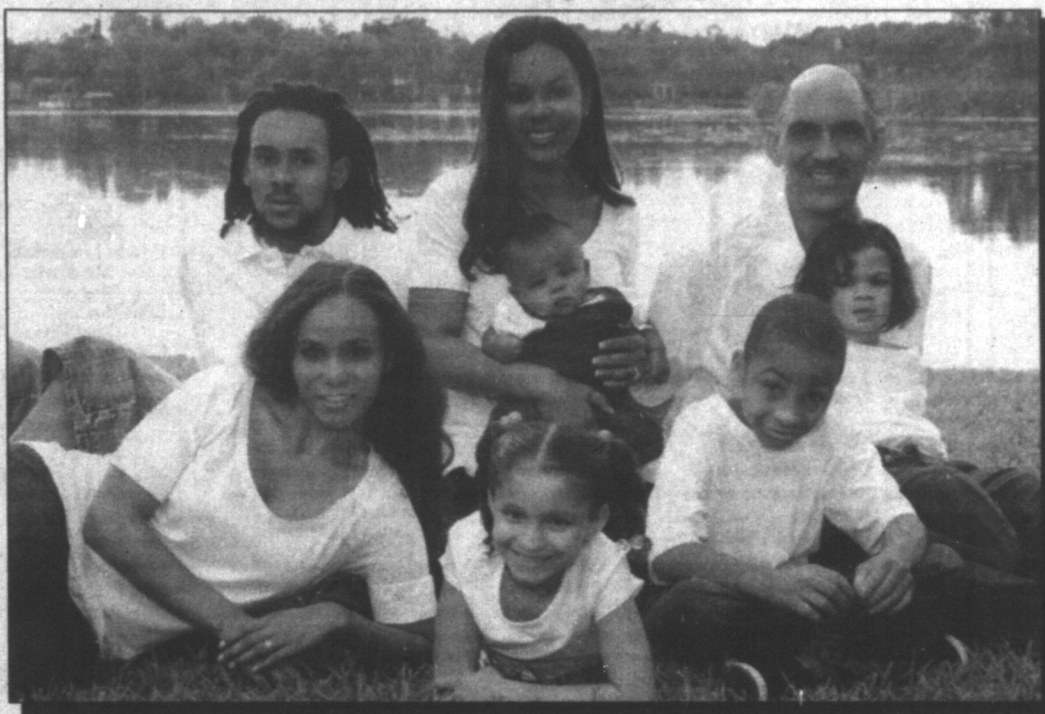
Dungy is the author or co-author of several books, including *The Mentor Leader: Secrets to Building People & Teams That Win* (scheduled for release Aug. 3); *Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, and Priorities of a Winning Life*; and *Uncommon: Finding your Path to Significance*.

In an interview with the Florida Baptist Witness during an All Pro Dads event in Tampa this spring, Dungy fielded questions about the challenges he's faced since retirement, his mentors in the faith, and what's it's like to live in the limelight.

Even at this stage of his life, Dungy said time management is the biggest challenge he has faced. Accustomed to the structured days of practice, travel, and games in professional football from July 20 until each year's playoffs and Super Bowl, Dungy now is learning to direct his own life.

"Trying to manage that and use the platform that God has given me and still be home enough to be effective as a dad, that's been a challenge," Dungy said.

In naming those to whom he looks for wisdom, Dungy said his pastor "in town" at Central Church, Jeffery Singletary, "has been sensational." Dungy said he still talks "all the time" to Richard Farmer, who was the pastor at Bethany Church in



ALL TOGETHER — Tony Dungy gathers his family, including the newest member and their fourth adopted child, Jason. Back row: Eric, 18; wife Lauren with 10-month old Jason; and Dungy with Justin, three. Front row: Tiara, 24; Jade, eight; and Jordan, nine. (BP photo courtesy of Shawn Ray Photography)

Pittsburgh when Dungy was newly married and playing for the Steelers.

Ken Whitten, another Tampa-area pastor, who was his pastor at Idlewild Church, which birthed the inner-city Central Church congregation, is another "great" in his life, Dungy said.

Whitten and Dungy have remained close, with the Dungy family continuing to be involved in missions and ministries at both church campuses, Whitten said in an interview.

"A leader has followers and Tony Dungy's leadership is measured by those who follow him both on and off the field," Whitten said. "Tony is

well-respected and loved in this community. His personal relationship with Jesus Christ is what defines him."

"In a world starving for heroes, it is imperative their lives exhibit an attitude and actions that young men and women can emulate. Tony Dungy is a man you can say, 'He is a role model.'"

Dungy said professional athletes and their families actually have something in common with ministers and their families: They live in the spotlight. He acknowledged it can be difficult and empathizes with pastors and their families who may feel like everyone is watching them.

"Your children do get a little stressed out because

everybody's around you, everybody's talking to you," Dungy said. "Sometimes it's a little hard to be out in public, but more than anything else, you realize you have a platform and you can be a role model and you can show people that Christ living through you is the way to go."

When the going gets tough and the kids don't want to live a fishbowl experience, Dungy said it's best to be straightforward. "You just have to say it goes with the territory; it's part of the job," he said.

"It won't always be this way, we just have to bear with it," he said he tells his children.

Groups criticize Obama Justice Dept. over response to ruling

WASHINGTON (BP) — A coalition of legal and pro-family groups says the Obama Justice Department is putting forward an inadequate legal defense of the National Day of Prayer, and they are asking a circuit court to allow them to participate in oral arguments.

At issue is an April ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb that the National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional and tantamount to a government establishment of religion. The Justice Department appealed the case to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals and filed its brief in early July, but the groups say the government's brief — while at 73 pages — is lacking in certain areas.

In short, the groups say the Justice Department failed to cite three specific Seventh Circuit cases, all from 2007 and 2008, that are binding precedent on the three-judge panel and would lead to a quick dismissal of the case. The *Freedom from Religion Foundation*,

which filed the lawsuit, lacked standing to sue, the groups say.

Among the groups that signed the motion are the Family Research Council, Focus on the Family Action, and Liberty Institute. Focus on the Family Founder James Dobson's name also is on the motion.

Such motions are rarely granted. "Even if we're not allowed to participate [in oral arguments], we are hopeful that, with these cases being brought to the court's attention, that they will quickly come to the conclusion that they lack jurisdiction to hear this case, and that the lower court lacked jurisdiction to hear it," Ken Klukowski, director of the Family Research Council's Center for Religious Liberty, told Baptist Press.

The groups' argument focuses on a technical legal question at the heart of the three Seventh Circuit cases and a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Hein v. Freedom from Religion Foundation*. Those three Seventh Circuit cases — citing the Supreme Court decision — ruled

that an Establishment Clause challenge could not be brought if Congress did not appropriate any funding in the challenged statute.

Because Congress did not set aside any money for the National Day of Prayer when it passed the Day of Prayer statute, the lawsuit should be dismissed, the groups say. The Justice Department's brief does not make that argument. Crabb's decision overturned the Day of Prayer statute.

The three cases are *Hinrichs v. Speaker of the House of Representatives* (2007), *Freedom from Religion Found., Inc. v. Nicholson* (2008), and *Laskowski v. Spellings* (2008).

Asked if he thought the Justice Department's failure to cite the cases was intentional or simply an oversight, Klukowski said, "At this point, I would want to give them the benefit of the doubt. They did present an argument that would result in a win in this case. But, nonetheless, the argument that we

put forward in our brief would be a much broader and robust victory to protect the First Amendment rights of Christians and people of all faiths going forward."

The Justice Department's brief does argue that the lawsuit should be dismissed but for different reasons. The brief says the statute "requires no one to pray" and that the *Freedom from Religion Foundation* cannot cite any personal injury sustained from the statute. The government's brief also points to the nation's history in defending the statute.

"[I]t can hardly be thought that in the same week Members of the First Congress both urged President Washington to proclaim a national day of prayer and thanksgiving and also voted to approve the draft of the First Amendment for submission to the States, 'they intended the Establishment Clause of the Amendment to forbid what they had just declared acceptable,'" the government's brief states.

COLLEGE NEWS

1. The "Mississippi Business Journal" recently named Clarksdale native Clare Agostinelli, assistant director at the Mississippi College Office of Career Services, one of the Magnolia State's 50 Leading Business Women for the class of 2010. The statewide magazine will spotlight Agostinelli and others around the state during events August 18-19 at the Eagle Ridge Conference Center, part of Hinds Community College in Raymond. Events will include an awards luncheon and networking sessions at the Hinds facility. There's also a dinner planned for the award winners at the Fairview Inn in Jackson.



1. Agostinelli

2. Mississippi College leaders welcomed about 60 prospects sizing up opportunities to enroll in the university's physician assistant program in January 2011. Physician assistants are health professionals who practice medicine as members of teams with their supervising physicians. Robert Philpot, who heads MC's new initiative, told prospects they would be joining a field with many doors open in Mississippi. For more information on the physician assistant program, contact Karen Verrell at verrell@mc.edu.

3. Making their third international tour since 2004, Mississippi College Singers are booked for concerts in South Africa next spring. For more information about the South Africa trip, contact James Meaders at (601) 925-3900 or meaders@mc.edu.

4. Mississippi College leaders are stepping up their recruitment of students for business administration classes in the new Flowood Center and will welcome prospects for a series of information sessions July 22, August 5, and August 12. MC School of Business Dean Marcelo Eduardo and Sara Kimmel, executive director of the Flowood Center and MC business professor, will field questions. Open to the public, the sessions are set for 5:30 p.m. at the River Room Conference Center across the street from the center at 115 Laurel Park Cove. For more information on the Flowood Center, contact MC's Office of Enrollment Services at (601) 925-3800.

5. On July 30 at 9:30 a.m. William Carey University will dedicate its Academic Building, Phase I of its new medical complex. An open house will follow. Soon afterward, the school will dedicate building two, the Medical Arts Building. A third building, the Asbury Administration Building, will be completed in December. Twenty-seven faculty members are ready to begin orientation on August 16. A White Coat Ceremony will be conducted in Smith Auditorium on August 21, at 5:00 p.m. followed by a reception. The August 21 event is very significant as medical students receive their white coats representing their entry into medical school and ultimately into the medical profession.



3. MC Singers

6. Mississippi College recently honored Mandy Pickett as the university's Pittman Young Professor of the Year. She has served since 2007 as the school's interior design coordinator and assistant professor in the Art Department, and is involved in the ongoing process to gain accreditation for the interior design program.



6. Pickett

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



1. Longino Church, Philadelphia



2. Liberty Church, Noxapater

1. **Longino Church, Philadelphia:** Enrollment, 122; average attendance, 93; ten professions of faith. Shown are some of the participants.

2. **Liberty Church, Noxapater:** June 21 - 25; enrollment, 90; two professions of faith. Shown are the participants.

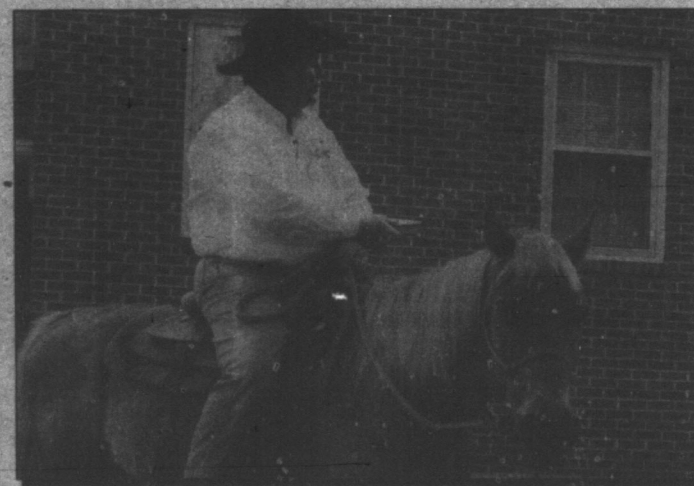
3. **First Church, Oloh:** June 6 - 11; shown is teacher Terri Ruckel helping VBS students make a quilt.

4. **Rienzi Church, Rienzi:** Shown is Ron Plymel, pastor, Southwood Church, Iuka, with his horse, Champ, presenting a message for the VBS kickoff.

5. **Grace United Church, Decatur:** June 20 - 23; average attendance, 45.



3. First Church, Oloh



4. Plymel

The South Carolina Baptist Convention is currently accepting resumes for the position of Area and Executive Director for the Evangelization and Missions Team. Qualified applicants must be an active member of a South Carolina Baptist Church, have knowledge of evangelism methods, as well as a strong commitment to evangelism and mission involvement. In addition, the candidate should possess appropriate educational, ministry, and supervisory experience.

Please send resumes to the Search Committee, c/o Office of the Executive Director - Treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, 190 Stoneridge Drive, Columbia, SC 29210.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Respect God's Holiness

2 Samuel 6:1-15, 17

By Tony Martin

In these days, our American culture no longer fears God nor treats the things of God with respect and reverence. But before we bemoan this fact, we must also acknowledge a possible lack of reverence for God's holiness when worshippers approach worship in a frivolous manner. This has nothing whatsoever to do with worship styles, because God can be honored in a variety of ways. Rather, it is the condition of the worshipper's heart, his or her willingness to humbly seek God and to honor Him ... and to remember that true reverence for God is manifested by obedience to His commands. It is bound up in the concept of "being holy," and to be holy simply means to be set apart for God's purposes.

Honor God in God's Way
(2 Sam. 6:1-5)

This first section deals with

the Ark of the Covenant being brought to the City of David (Jerusalem). David wanted to honor the Lord by making sure God was at the center of Israel's life — one nation under God, as it were — and having the Ark in Jerusalem would show that. Rather than transporting the Ark as instructed in the Law, the Ark was placed on a new ox cart and pulled by oxen.

This may not seem like a big deal, but note that in moving the Ark in this fashion, David was disobeying the law. In Exodus 25:14-15 and Numbers 1:50-51, the law states that the Levites were to carry the Ark with long poles through the rings of the Ark. In 1 Samuel 4-6, we can see how the Philistines captured the Ark in battle and returned it to Israelite territory — and when they transported it, they placed it on a new cart pulled by two cows (1 Sam. 6:7-12). In fact, the



Martin

Israelites, under David's direction, were following the pattern of the Philistines.

Even when our motives are sincere, we need to respect God's holiness and be obedient to His commands. Doing what we believe to be God's will in a way that violates God's

Word grieves God. Sometimes it seems that churches tend to operate under more of the authority of Roberts' Rules of Order and the Constitution and Bylaws than they do scripture itself.

Respect the Holiness of God
(2 Sam. 6:6-11)

God does not take our insensitivity to His holiness lightly. This sobering passage tells of how the oxen carrying the Ark stumbled, and Uzzah, acting with good motives, reaches out and touches the Ark. God strikes him and he falls dead beside the Ark. God had warned about this sort of irreverence in the Law of Moses (Num. 1:51, 4:15, 20). This whole incident could have been avoided had the Ark been han-

dled as God had directed in the first place.

Verse 9 states that "David was afraid of the Lord that day" — an understatement, for sure — and asks God, "How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?" He then takes the Ark to the home of Obed-Edom, a Gittite, and there it remained for three months.

Today's church should take note. No amount of unity in a church can compensate for disobedience. It is entirely possible that a church become so enamored of its organization and professionalism that it misses the blessings of God altogether. In order for a church to understand God's will, it must always base its actions on God's Word. There is an inherent danger in doing God's work man's way.

Worship with Enthusiastic
Reverence

(2 Sam. 12-15, 17)

After three months in Obed-Edom's house, David was able to continue moving the Ark to the City of David. This was a joyful occasion. David was so mindful of being obedient — doing God's work God's way — that after just six steps with the

Ark, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. When the procession reached Jerusalem, the priests offered fourteen more sacrifices (1 Chron. 15:26).

And David danced for joy with all his might. His dance was personal and sincere. He was dressed in a priestly linen ephod and gave himself over to the enthusiasm he had. Interestingly, the word enthusiasm comes from the Greek word *enthousiasmos*, which means "having the god within." So, it is right to worship God joyfully and enthusiastically. Without getting into a debate as to how that enthusiasm in worship should be expressed in our contemporary culture, understand that it is even more important to be obedient to God in worship. Obedience to God, both privately and corporately, can be the highest form of worship. We honor God by doing things the way He wants them done.

Scripture cited is from the New International Version.

Martin is the Associate Editor of The Baptist Record.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Relationships:
The Integrity Factor

2 Corinthians 1:1-2:17

By Laura Leathers

What comes to your mind when you hear the name George Washington? What about Moses, Judas, Billy Graham, or a man named Saul? A name is given at birth, passed down through generations, and at the end of life it might be engraved upon a stone. It is natural for people to associate a person's name with their character. Character represents who you are and what you believe. The Bible reminds us, "A good name is to be more desired than great wealth (Proverbs 22:1a)." When a black mark is checked against a name, the integrity associated with that name begins to erode.

Saul brought persecution to the early church. What a reputation he had! His name brought

fear—that is until he met Jesus on the Damascus Road (Acts 9). His life

was radically transformed and so was his name—to the Apostle Paul. Now, several years later, we find Paul "in the heat of battle against those attacking his credibility (MacArthur Study Bible)." This meant his ministry and relationship with the Corinthian church were frayed. This second letter to the Corinthians is very personal and hones in on establishing integrity in relationships. This principle is essential to the church's ministry and it begins with focusing on how to ...

Live For Others — 2 Cor. 1:3-7

Where do you turn for comfort in the midst of disappointing relationships, afflictions, and difficult circumstances? Paul knew firsthand what



Leathers

affliction meant—it was his middle name. His ministry and life were always being threatened. Where did he turn? He turned to the "God of all comfort" (vs. 3). Usually when we think of giving comfort to someone we think of providing

softness and ease, but here the word comfort means to give courage, strength, and boldness (vv.4-10).

Throughout these verses listen to Paul's heart as he shares passionately about the God of all comfort who knows our afflictions so we can help those who are in affliction; the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance and so is our comfort through Christ; and as we are sharers of our sufferings so we are to be sharers of His comfort. This is how we live for others.

Live In God's Strength
2 Cor. 1:8-11

We do not know what the circumstances were which Paul faced in Asia, but it was severe. Paul wrote that he didn't want

the Corinthians to be unaware of 'our affliction' and 'we despaired even of life'. "Paul faced something that was beyond human survival and was extremely discouraging because he believed it threatened to end his ministry prematurely. The Greek word for 'despaired' literally means "no passage," the total absence of an exit (MacArthur Study Bible)." Through this experience he tells his readers "we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead ... on whom we have set our hope." Later in this Epistle Paul writes, "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness' ... therefore I am well content with weaknesses ... for when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:9-10, NASB)

This passage ends with "so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many." Relationships are strengthened when we understand what others are going through, offer intercessory

prayers and then watch and wait to see how God is glorified through the situation.

Live So God Approves
2 Cor. 1:12; 2:14-17

Do you seek man's approval or God's approval? After further discourse about his circumstances, Paul turns the corner from being disheartened to being joyful. He writes, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ." His proud confidence was in the grace of God (1:12); he had a joyful perspective and he was grateful for the privilege to be an influence to other others (2:14).

Life is to be lived for God's approval and for His glory. "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. Living a life God approves means being a faithful servant and being an influence for the gospel — 'enter into the joy of your master' (Matt. 25:21). This is living a life of integrity!"

Leathers is a member of First Church, Durant.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.



Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

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All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

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THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Christian comics theme draws international audience

LEESBURG, FL. (BP) — In 1872, baby boy John Harper is born in the dark of night in the Scottish village of Houston.

"Father, he is a gift from You, thus we will dedicate him to You. His name will be John," his mustached, middle-aged, working-class father declares, looking toward the heavens, clutching the baby to his chest.

"Yes, a good Bible name," John's mother says, drops of sweat pouring from her otherwise serene face as she reclines against a rumpled pillow, a midwife looking on.

On a glossy comic book's opening page, bright graphic artwork in four blocks introduces the engrossing biography of a Baptist preacher who survived three close brushes with drowning before finally perishing with the Titanic.

The Last Convert of John Harper is one of a new line of comic books which encompasses five genres — adventure, biography, sci-fi, biblical epic and historical fiction — and the creative passion of Art Ayris, who is both the executive pastor of First Church in Leesburg, Fla., and CEO of Kingstone Media.

Ayris has long been part of the inventive leadership at First Church, a congregation which ministers through a

Christian school and a Christian Care Center encompassing a men's shelter with drug and alcohol rehabilitation, shelters for women and children, a pregnancy care center, medical help for the unemployed and other benevolence aid, and a counseling center.

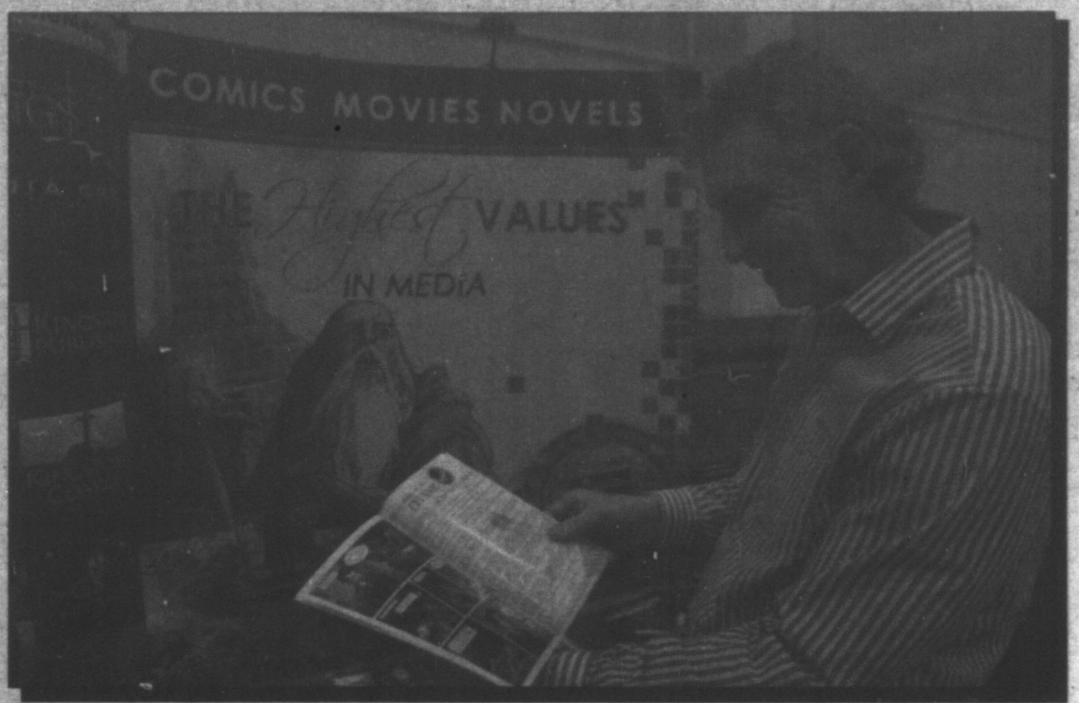
Like John Harper, who in the comic book climbs to the top of a well and looks over before falling in, Ayris has had a few close calls with death himself.

Relating his "God story," Ayris told the Florida Baptist Witness he was in a near fatal accident at the age of 5 when he was struck in the abdomen by blade thrown from a lawn mower his father was driving.

"I came very close to dying," Ayris recounted. A call was placed to the local jail for prisoners to give blood. Ayris said his father, who owned a construction company, and his mother, a teacher, were overwhelmed when prisoners responded to the call.

At age 18, Ayris almost died again and was hospitalized for 30 days when gangrene set in because of scar tissue from the previous injury.

"In that time in the hospital, I really realized there was something else out there and I was not prepared for that,"



SETTING PRIORITIES — Art Ayris, executive pastor of First Church, Leesburg, Fla., and CEO of Kingstone Media, has learned to make his local church his "first love," while also focusing on his growing Christian comic book company. (BP photo)

Ayris said. "A little later after that I became a Christian."

After earning a degree in criminology at Florida State University, Ayris said he first set his sights on working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Drug Enforcement Administration, but finally decided to go back to school for certification to teach special education.

"God just really redirected my path," said Ayris, who put his passion for children and teens to work at First Church, building "Saturday-Sunday Schools" and what at one time was one of the largest Vacation Bible Schools in the nation.

"Throughout that, God just really burdened my heart for kids, especially through the media," he said.

On stage in front of a large group of unchurched kids, Ayris said he had an "epiphany" about communicating more creatively. Soon planning large-scale productions like an annual walk-through Nativity at Christmas, Ayris befriended J.B. Jones, a man from Miami who worked on James Bond films as well as 60 other films.

Ayris said Jones encouraged him in media. "All of that was really a context for the whole comic thing we are doing," he said.

It didn't hurt that his mother, who had an earned doctorate in education, read a picture Bible to Ayris when he was growing up and paid him a nickel for every page he wrote.

"My father gave me my work ethic and my mom gave me my creativity," he said.

With a heart for evangelism, but a pragmatic side that understands how people respond to creative media, Ayris felt that something was missing so he began a 40-day fast.

"Either I need to hear from You on this or I am dropping it and won't ever pick it up again," he told God.

Five days later, walking through a supermarket parking lot, Ayris began weeping as God gave him an "overwhelming, precise, to-the-second answer." Drawing on his years in ministry and using the wealth of Bible knowledge he stored in his heart through memorizing Scripture, he let God lead the way in showing him the stories which might appeal to an 18-25-year-old target audience.

John Harper, the Baptist preacher in Ayris' comic book, also had an unusual start to his visionary ministry. After his early brush with death, the young minister is shown preaching in the streets and ghettos, handing out clothes and blankets with compassion while warning passersby, "The wages of sin is death... but the gift of God is eternal life!"

Harper was declared an "angel God has sent to the slums," and in 1892 he undertook studies at the Baptist Pioneer Mission in London to "refine his gift." In establishing the Paisley Street Baptist Mission, which today is known as Harper Memorial Church in London, Harper became a visionary in finding ways to meet needs while sharing the Gospel.

Harper was invited twice to preach at the Moody Church in Chicago. While attempting to travel there for a second time, he ended up on the Titanic in 1912.

In comic book-style graphic art depicting Harper's actions after the dramatic few hours when an iceberg struck the massive ship until it sank, the 39-year-old widowed preacher is shown placing his six-year-old daughter Nana on a lifeboat

before he goes through the ship and extending his arm in invitation — "women, children, and the unsaved to the LIFEBOATS!"

Thrusting one of the few remaining life vests toward someone who tells Harper he is not saved, Harper jumps overboard as the ship splits and sinks.

"Believe in Christ. He can and will save you," Harper says to one floundering man before he is shown grasping a wooden plank and attempting to speak to others floating around him.

"Christ d - d — died for your sin," he stutters. "A - A — Ask for His forgiveness!" an immersed Harper says in another frame, puffing bluish-white frigid air while water drips from his face.

Four years later at a survivor's meeting in Canada, one of those Harper spoke to that night, and presumably the last person who saw him alive, declares: "I am the last convert of John Harper."

Ayris said he is stunned by the international response. The comics are going into 18 countries through a Spanish distributor, and a Brazilian distributor is planning translation into Portuguese for some titles.

The Revelation has been produced in Arabic with other titles forthcoming in that language, while a Bible society in the Middle East covering five Arabic countries has placed their first order.

Keeping in step with the digital age, Ayris said Kingstone Media currently is negotiating with the largest cell phone comic book distributor in Japan and possibly the world. Kingstone has also budgeted a "good part" of its funds for digital translation and distribution through iPad, e-book (electronic) and cell phone applications.



CROSSING CULTURES — Comic books produced by Kingstone Media carrying a faith message are being translated into an increasing number of languages, including Arabic, as Art Ayris' company continues to grow internationally. (BP art)